Relations with Iran

1894. SHRI SHAHID SIDDIQUI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the impact of Hyde Act on India's relations with Iran;

(b) whether our close ties with US influences India's relations with Iran; and

(c) whether Government think that Iran's program is for peaceful nuclear development?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) There is no impact on foreign policy. PM had assured Parliament in his statement in the Rajya Sabha on 17 August, 2006 that "Our foreign policy is determined solely by our national interests. No legislation enacted in a foreign country can take away from us that sovereign right. Thus, there is no question of India being bound by a law passed by a foreign legislature. Our sole-guiding principle in regard to our foreign policy, whether it is on Iran or any other country, will be, dictated entirely by our national interest."

(b) No.

(c) Iran maintains that its nuclear programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes. Reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) continue to state that the Agency is unable to fully reconstruct the history of Iran's nuclear programme and provide full assurances of its exclusively peaceful nature or about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran.

Highway along Mount Everest

1895. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Chinese authorities are making a highway along Mount Everest whereas the Himalayas are already burdened with several 'man-made threats';

(b) whether this new blow by Chinese of robbing Himalayas with a highway would pose a lot of danger and threat to global environment as well as pose threat to India's security;

(c) if so, whether the Chinese authorities have been apprised of India's concern;

(d) if so, the Chinese response thereto; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) (a) to (e) Government have seen media reports stating that China plans to construct a highway on Mount Everest located on the border between Nepal and Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China so as to facilitate the carriage of the Olympic torch to various places in the People's Republic of China

as part of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. According to these reports, construction would be completed in four months at an estimated cost of US$ 19.7 million. According to media reports, the Chinese side has said that they would be mindful of environmental concerns while doing so. Government keep a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's national interests and take all necessary measures to safeguard these interests.

Road linking India and Myanmar

1896. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are constructing a road linking India and Myanmar;

(b) if so, by when the construction would begin; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) There is a road between Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo that has linked India and Myanmar since February, 2001. At present, the road is being maintained and repaired by Border Roads Organisation under a bilateral agreement between India and Myanmar.

Fishermen with Pakistan Authorities

1897. SHRI KESHUBHAI S. PATEL:
SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Gujarat and MPs of Gujarat State have represented to take up issue of release of languishing fishermen with Pakistan Authorities;

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard and the response of Government of Pakistan; and

(c) the number of fishermen and boats that are still under the custody of Pakistan (*i.e.* PMSA) particularly belonging to Gujarat State?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes.

(b) Government have taken up the issue of the release of Indian fishermen and their boats regularly with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, Government had raised the issue of fishermen with Pakistan at the Home Secretary level talks on July 3-4, 2007 in New Delhi and the two sides had agreed to release on August 14-15, 2007 eligible prisoners and fishermen and to release boats except trawlers in each other's custody. However, Pakistan released only 100 Indian fishermen on 13 August 2007.

(c) 296 Indian fishermen and 327 boats continue to be in Pakistani custody.